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Author(s): Charles D. Greenfield
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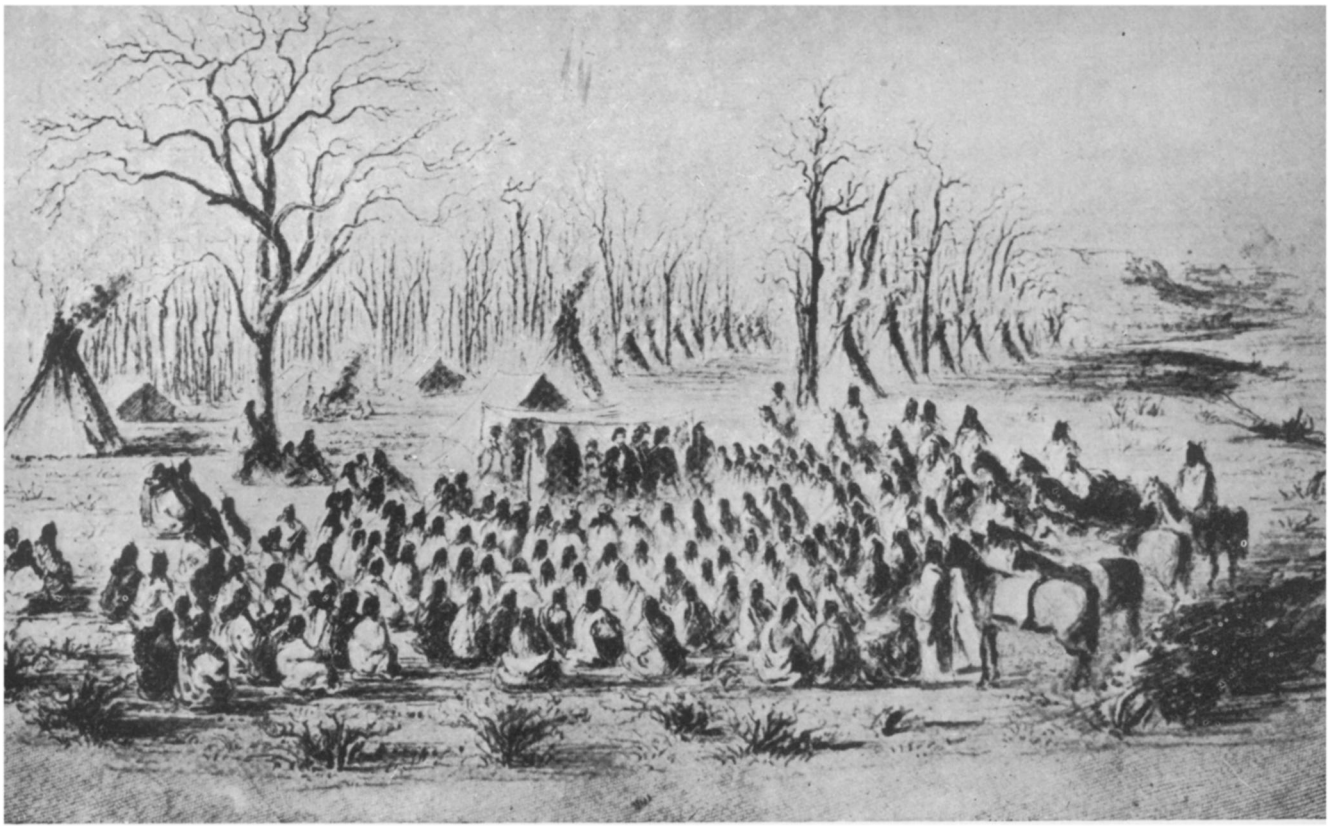

BLACKFEET COUNCIL of 1855 at which Gov. Isaac Stevens negotiated the celebrated treaty is seen in this contemporary drawing. Little Dog, who helped induce the Piegans to join the council, attended the meeting, signed the treaty, and strove to live up to its terms.

Little Dog, Once-Fierce Piegan Warrior, Was Wise And Just Beyond His Time

by CHARLES D. GREENFIELD

AS A YOUNG WARRIOR he had come down from the north to Fort Benton, hating all Americans and glorying in killing them. Decades later, because of his respect for white men and their property, he was murdered by his own tribesmen. This was Little Dog, for nearly three decades soldier chief of the savage Piegan Blackfeet. His daring and reckless exploits in tribal wars (from 1840 until the first of the Indian treaties) made him famous throughout the Northwest.

In the light of history, Little Dog is even more famous as a wise and courageous Indian leader who realized, long before his time, the inevitability of change from the old ways. He respected terms of the treaties he signed as a tribal leader; he became an avid peacemaker between the Blackfeet and the whites; he became the first man of his tribe to make a serious try at farming.

This writer once casually inquired of a mixed blood if any of Little Dog's descendants still lived on the Blackfeet Reservation. "Oh yes," was the reply, and after a pause he added: "He was the best of all; there has never been another member of the tribe like him." This opinion is re-echoed by many white contemporaries.

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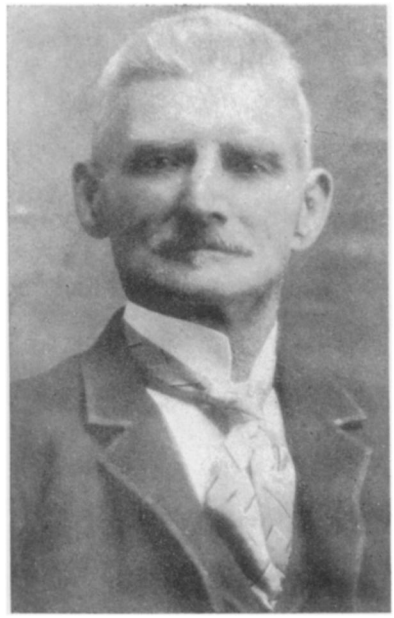

WILLIAM T. (Uncle Billy) HAMILTON, colorful and outspoken Indian trader, Army scout, lawman and guide, became Little Dog's warmest white friend. Born in England in 1822, Hamilton came to New Orleans with his parents and for reasons of health, went on a trading expedition to Green River as a young man. A participant in the California gold rush of 1849, he married and settled down, only to lose his wife and child in 1851. Bitterly he joined the Buckskin Rangers, fought Indians in California, and took part in the Modoc War of 1856. A master at Indian sign talk, Hamilton was hired by Colonel George Wright, during the Civil War commander of the Army of the Pacific, to scout among the Indians east of the Rockies. Hamilton fell in love with the Bitterroot country, erecting his cabin at the mouth of Rattlesnake Creek in the winter of 1860-61. It was the first building on the present site of Missoula. He sold out in 1864 and moved to Fort Benton, two years later becoming sheriff of Chouteau County and a deputy U. S. Marshal. In 1869 he moved to the Yellowstone, which was to be his home until his death at 86 in May, 1908. Hamilton served as a scout for General Crook, and escaped the fate of Custer's men only because he was with the main body of troops at the time. In his later years he served as a guide to hunters in the Yellowstone country, living alone in his cabin on the north bank of the river.

William T. (Uncle Billy) Hamilton, the veteran Indian trader, army scout, sheriff and deputy marshal, was one of Little Dog's closest white friends, although Hamilton himself confessed he had previously had little reason to like any Indian. "He was one of the most remarkable Indians on the plains," Hamilton said of him.[1]

John J. (Johnny) Healy, the energetic Irish frontiersman who traded with the Piegans along the old Whoop-Up Trail and later became one of Montana Territory's most colorful law officers, described Little Dog as "braver than the bravest member of his tribe, a terror to his enemies, but always a devoted friend of the whites."[2]

If the order in which Indian leaders signed treaties can be taken as a criterion, Little Dog's years of greatest influence came in the decade after 1855. Among several pages of Indian signers to the treaty obtained by Governor Isaac Stevens with the Blackfeet, Flathead and Nez Perce tribes, (October 17, 1855 at the mouth of the Judith River) Little Dog's mark was the fifth to be imprinted. He was the first signatory, however, to the treaty of November 16, 1865 between the United States "and the Blackfeet nation of Indians."

That his fame was known to tribes other than the Blackfeet would seem to be indicated by two entries in the Fort Sarpy Journal. The first, dated June 6, 1855, was written while Little Dog was accompanying the diarist's party to Fort Berthold in Dakota. He wrote: "Two hundred lodges of Assynaboins are camped and if they should come across the Little Dog they would soon make wolf meat of him." The second entry, two days later, reads: "Arrived safe at Fort Berthold 7 m. Found a large delegation of Ricarees & Mandans at the village waiting to receive the Little Dog."

Little Dog started out in life hating, if not all whites, at least all Americans. There is no telling how many he murdered as a young warrior; he admitted being the leader of one Blackfeet raiding party that wiped out, to the last baby, every member of an emigrant train on the Snake river, not far from Fort Hall.[3] More on that later. Gradually his hostility waned until he became known as the most trustworthy Blackfeet Indian friend the whites had; so good, indeed,

[1] Narrative of William T. Hamilton, *Contributions* to the Montana Historical Society, Vol. 3, pp. 58-123.

[2] Quoted in *Then and Now,* Robert Vaughan, p. 158.

[3] James H. Bradley, *Contributions,* Vol. 9, p. 340.

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JOHN J. (Johnny) HEALY, the colorful Irish prospector who topped off his career trading with the Piegans and Bloods along the Whoop-Up Trail and bringing law and order to Chouteau County in the 1870's, was another white man who praised the courage and leadership of Little Dog. Healy, who passionately pursued but never found his fortune on the frontier, came West with the Second U. S. Dragoons in 1858. Galled with the routine of soldiering after two years, he haunted the gulches of Montana and Idaho with the Kennedy brothers, Stephen, John and Peter, finally pursuing their search for gold as far north as Edmonton. Later he settled at Boulder, Montana, and tried unsuccessfully to promote the townsite into a booming metropolis. It was after the Hudson's Bay company ceded to Canada its vast domain in southern Alberta in 1869 that Johnny Healy and A. B. Hamilton took advantage of the absence of border law and built Fort Whoop-Up, the first of the Canadian "whiskey forts." Even this notorious profit-making business failed to net Healy his sought-after personal fortune: most of the profits found their way to silent partners in Fort Benton. When the Canadian Mounted Police cut off the unsavory trade in 1874, Healy again drifted from job to job, finally wangling an appointment as Chouteau County sheriff in June, 1877. With incredible skill, Johnny Healy brought order to this lawless land, although his methods eventually galled the public to the point where he was defeated in the 1882 election.

that his life and that of his eldest son, Fringe, were declared forfeit by his own tribesmen because of his ruthless zeal in protecting white men and their property from thieving Piegans.

Little Dog probably came by his original hatred through inheritance and association. Since the days of Lewis and Clark, the Blackfeet had been deadly enemies of Americans after Captain Lewis (in self defense) killed a member of the tribe. Little Dog was not a Piegan full blood, but rather had part-Blood ancestry. He was believed to be a first cousin of Mrs. Alexander Culbertson, daughter of a prominent Blood chief.[4] The Bloods had always been as violently prejudiced against Americans as they were in favor of British traders:

"The Blackfeet were in communication with the posts of the British traders upon the Saskatchewan, from which they obtained arms, ammunition and all the commodities of civilization required in their wild life. . . . Besides, in consequence of the killing of one of their number by Captain Lewis in 1806, they had conceived the most violent hatred of the Americans, a feeling most carefully fostered by the British traders to prevent competition,

[4] *Contributions,* Vol. 10, p. 243.

MRS. ALEXANDER CULBERTSON, the daughter of a Blood Indian chief, is believed by many to have been the cousin of Little Dog, and is credited with having pursuaded him to round up the Piegans for the counsel with Isaac I. Stevens which culminated in the Treaty of 1885, a treaty which Little Dog signed and respected. Named Medicine Snake Woman and also called Natawista, Mrs. Culbertson worked closely with her famous fur-trader husband in establishing friendly relations between the Stevens Survey party and the Blackfeet.

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and they had fiercely declared they would rather hang the scalp of an American to their girdle than kill a buffalo to keep from starving."[5]

As a young man, Little Dog was "a great brave, and though at peace with the American Fur Company, was accustomed to lead his warriors on far distant forays into the country of many Indian enemies and sometimes against parties of white traders, trappers or hunters or travelers not connected with the trading post of Fort Benton."[6] His relationship to the wife of the post trader undoubtedly accounted for the immunity extended by Little Dog to Americans in that area.

One wonders if the two mules and four horses Little Dog traded in at Fort Benton October 3, 1854 were loot from an emigrant train or stolen from other tribes! In fur trading days there was no interest at all in what kind of a title an Indian held to property he was trading. An entry in the Fort Benton Journal of September 15, 1855 casually observes: "Little Dog returned, bringing in Flathead horses stolen by the Piegans which are on Milk River with plenty of meat."

While Little Dog's first exploit as a young warrior was not at all to the liking of his tribe, it revealed his reckless courage and strong determination to follow the dictates of his own mind. Ironically, it directly resulted in peace being effected between the Piegans and the Flatheads against whom his first coup was made:

"Awakening to the full consciousness that he was born to the mission of leadership, a consciousness contributed to by the rude religious rites, he was prone to reticence and moodiness. Mounting his favorite war horse he would ride off alone to the Sweet Grass hills and there in lonely fasting and incantation for several days and nights, he would commune with the Great Spirit, seeking direction as to the details of some daring expedition and the location of the tribe upon which its ravages were to be inflicted."[7]

Returning from one of his communions in the hills, he set a white pole in the ground in front of his lodge. He painted it with divers colors and adorned it with the trappings of war. "Then riding forth around the village he sang his war songs . . . inviting young warriors to congregate at his lodge to enlist in a glorious expedition. When assembled at the pole he explained his vision, which appeared in the night on the hills, recounted to his auditors his fastings, his successful test of the sun dance in which the thongs were torn through the slits in his breast and exhorted them to join him in his campaign."[8]

The expedition went into the country of the Flatheads. Day after day passed while they waited for an opportunity to attack. Finally Little Dog went forth alone in the night and raising his eyes toward the stars, muttered anew his prayers and incantations. At dawn he returned to the encampment and told his followers, "Stars say no blood, no blood." A second time he went forth in the night for a period of self communion, and returning, announced, "Stars say no blood, no ponies."

His followers were disgusted and their opinion of his leadership abruptly fell. He himself was down-hearted. The expedition proved a fiasco. Little Dog would be the laughing stock of the village! Then one day while spying upon the Flathead camp, his glance fell upon Pretty Flower, daughter of Bear Track, the Flathead war chief. He made up his mind to capture and bring her, as a prisoner, to the Piegan camp. A short time later this opportunity presented itself. The Piegans fled with their captive and the evening of their first camp brought her to Little Dog's lodge. She told him she was betrothed to Wallikoo, a Kootenai chief, and admitted her love for him. She told him of her happy place in the hearts of all her tribe and of how the flowers, ever since her earliest childhood, had whispered of her future mission of

[5] James H. Bradley, *Contributions,* Vol. 2, p. 147.

[6] James H. Bradley, *Contributions,* Vol. 9, p. 337.

[7] Arthur J. Craven, *Rocky Mountain Magazine,* Oct., 1900. Material for Craven's article was obtained from William T. Hamilton.

[8] Ibid.

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usefulness in the tribe whose chief would adopt her as his wife.

Little Dog was touched. He went to the creek, plucked a large bouquet of syringa blossoms, and these—the fragrant white symbols of innocence — he wove in the interlacings of the entrance to the lodge where Pretty Flower was confined, as an inviolable seal to the sanctity of maidenhood. Taking a blanket he left the lodge and slept alone on the bank of the stream.

His comrades were sullen when he told them he would return Pretty Flower to her father's lodge. They protested in vain. While the other warriors proceeded back to the Piegan camp, Little Dog took the back trail to the Flathead camp. Arriving there, he waited for night. Pretty Flower said she could go in alone, but that did not suit Little Dog. When the moon was low and the Indians deep in sleep, he entered the village with her and saw her to the flap of her father's lodge.

Later, so the account runs, Bear Track came with a large band of ponies and many presents which he distributed among the members of a Piegan council, in gratitude for Pretty Flower's return, unharmed. He proposed a peace at this council between the Flatheads and Piegans. That it was never again broken, which has been affirmed, is doubted.[9]

Thereafter, by a succession of brave exploits—some of them sufficiently bloody to satisfy even his former critics—Little Dog advanced "to the proud distinction of being the most noted war chief, not only in his own tribe, but throughout the entire northwest."[10]

Here is one of his many exploits, this one pulled off, according to Johnny Healy, with the help of his son, Fringe, "who was the father's counterpart in personal appearance, and also possessed the reckless courage and remarkable intelligence of his parent." Healy went on to say:

"It is said, and I have personal knowledge of more than one instance in proof of this assertion, that these two men were, in deadly encounter, more than a match for ten of the best warriors of the tribe, and such was the confidence felt in their skill and prowess, that a war party under their command would follow them into the very jaws of death. I will relate one instance to show the sort of stuff these two Indians were made of.

"A war party of Piegans, consisting of twenty well armed and mounted men, had encountered six Assinaboines. The latter had taken shelter in an Indian war house, a structure built of logs and affording a strong and safe defense to those within. After fighting hard all day, the Piegans were unable to take the fortifications, and would probably have withdrawn from the contest after the sun went down. But towards evening Little Dog and his son, attracted by the firing, came up, and learning that the war house was defended by only six men, laughed at their own warriors, the Piegans, calling them cowards and squaws, and without a moment's hesitation dashed up to the fort in the face of a deadly fire from those within, leaped over the logs, killed four of the defenders and dragged the remaining two out of the fort and turned them over to the squaws to be put to death."[11]

Another of Little Dog's adventures is related in the biography of Jiram Isham Allen, who came to Montana in 1862 as an employe of the American Fur Company. In an 1856-57 raid on a Sioux camp, Crow Indians stole a pinto horse, described as not only the fleetest, but likewise the most beautiful equine in the Crow nation. It became famous among all the Indian tribes of the northwest, and the Crows guarded it day and night.

One day, early in 1858, Little Dog announced at a Piegan council meeting that before two moons had passed, he would be riding the famed pinto. A short time later he left, alone, to find the Crow camp, finally locating it on the Lower Musselshell. He tried, vainly, for several nights to steal the animal. Then, one morning, he found the Crow camp on the move. He hid in a coulee close to the Crow route.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] J. J. Healy, quoted in Vaughan's *Then and Now*, p. 158.

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WINTER CAMP OF THE CROWS (Edw. S. Curtis photo)

Luck was with him. Leading the advance and some distance ahead of the main body of Crows, rode the owner of the pinto. Little Dog shot him dead, and rushing forward, leaped on the prize animal and fled for his life. Jubilantly that night he rode into the Piegan camp astride the wonderful pinto.

As indicated earlier, Little Dog's closest white friend was probably "Uncle Billy" Hamilton, the long-time Indian hater. Hamilton was a government scout in the campaign against the Yakima, Spokane, Palouse and allied tribes in 1858 under Colonel Wright. Wright employed Hamilton to run down a rumor the Indians on the east side of the continental divide were about to launch another war against the whites. Hamilton had never before been in this region north of the Missouri, but with a halfbreed companion named Alex McKay left Walla Walla September 25, 1858, on a journey fraught with peril every mile of the way. His complete confidence in his ability to carry out the mission was based on his deep knowledge of Indian character, his complete mastery of the sign language to an extent that amazed all Indians, the government brand upon the mules he had, and lastly, a large envelope with an imposing government seal. He interpreted to the Indians the message in the envelope as circumstances dictated. Subsequent events proved his judgment sound.

Near what is now Drummond, he met a band of Flatheads and with them crossed to the east side of the divide by Cadotte's Pass. At the Piegan-Blood agency on Sun River October 18, he first heard of Little Dog from Colonel Vaughan, the agent in charge. Vaughan told him where Little

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Dog was camped and urged him by all means to see him, since he was head chief of the Piegans and might render great assistance.

Two days later, anticipating a visit from Little Dog that evening, Hamilton and McKay took off their soiled buckskin suits to don costly caribou suits with double fringes at every seam. "Imagine yourself appearing before some prominent person with a plain dirty suit on," wrote Hamilton later. "It has the same effect upon an Indian chief, or at all events I always found it so."[12]

With a retinue of 25 Piegans, Little Dog that evening dashed to Hamilton's camp, reining to a sudden stop fifty yards distant. "Sure enough it was Little Dog," Hamilton writes, "and he dismounted with a proud step and advanced. I met him half way. He scrutinized me from head to foot, then reached out his hand with the customary remark of 'How!' He was a fine looking specimen of an Indian chieftain. He was over six feet in height, straight as an arrow with his implements of war on his person and a magnificent war bonnet upon his head. Three years after this I became the owner of the bonnet."

Little Dog introduced Hamilton to his eldest son, nineteen-year-old Fringe: "handsome as Apollo and as proud as Lucifer." The scout gave Fringe a handsome blanket and comments that "ever after father and son were as brothers to me and I to them, until their death, which occurred nine years after.[13] These two Indians, Little Dog and his son, affected me as no other Indians ever had. An attachment sprung up in my breast for them that I could not understand and account for, since I was considered by all my mountain friends to be very bitter and anything but friendly with Indians. I had lost many friends to them."

Little Dog told his newfound friend he believed there were Blackfeet around and so, when he returned to his camp on the

[12] Narrative of William T. Hamilton, *Contributions*, Vol. 3.

[13] It was not quite eight years later. According to the *Montana Post*, the killings occurred May 27, 1866.

PIEGAN CHIEFS, photographed in 1892 by J. N. Choate of Carlisle, Pa., include Little Dog the Younger, seated center. Descendants of Little Dog, the Piegan chief who is sometimes called Little Dog the Elder, still live on the Blackfeet Reservation. Other Piegans pictured here are, left to right, Running Crane, White Grass, Four Horns, Brocky, White Calf, Young Bear Chief, and Little Plume.

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WAGON BOX FIGHT, in which 32 woodcutters were engaged by Red Cloud's forces in August, 1876, near Fort Phil Kearny, was dramatically depicted, left, by C. M. Russell. Opposite page, below, is the Cowboy Artist's conception of the Cheyenne watching the Union Pacific track layers invade their lands.

Marias, he would leave Fringe and two other Piegans to make the Blackfeet leave should they appear. They did appear and were driven off by the Piegans.

After visiting the Piegans (and later a Crow camp) trading for buffalo robes, Hamilton made ready October 24 to leave for a camp of Blackfeet on the north fork of the Milk River, just down from Canada. Writes Hamilton: "Little Dog then called me into his lodge, and produced three arrows peculiarly marked, informing me not to lose them, but when at the Blackfeet village to show them to their chief. I am satisfied that by reason of these arrows we got clear of the Blackfeet, though Fringe and five other Indians accompanied us."

Concluding his trading in the Blackfeet camp, Hamilton told them he was leaving the following morning. They scowled and spoke something to Fringe who "jumped up, throwing his blanket off, drawing his revolver and pointing his finger at the head chief, his eyes flashing fire, and in a ringing voice addressed them in a tone which was plainly understood. The other three Piegans had thrown off their blankets and were standing by the side of Fringe, leaning upon their guns; while Mc and myself stood with our packs against our backs, with arms ready for use." Fortunately Fringe's oratory prevailed, the Blackfeet then trying to ascertain what route the whites planned to take.

The next morning Fringe and the other Piegans held the Blackfeet back while Hamilton and McKay packed. Fringe urged them to return to Little Dog's camp, saying the Blackfeet had evil hearts, but Hamilton wanted to visit a camp of Kootenai Indians which Fringe had learned from the Blackfeet was at St. Mary's Lake.

So the Piegans accompanied the two for a few miles to show them the best and shortest route. It was well that they did, for before noon the two white men fought three Blackfeet and killed them. Soon the main party of Blackfeet were in hot pursuit and two pitched battles were fought between the Blackfeet and Koo-

Charles D. Greenfield, a second generation, pioneer Montana newspaperman, has a deep interest in the history of his state; the enlightened Piegan chief, Little Dog, has particularly intrigued him for many years. Now living in retirement on his acreage at the foot of Helena Valley's Scratch Gravel Hills, Greenfield followed the footsteps of his father, the late Charles D. Greenfield, Sr. in a journalism career on early-day Helena newspapers. The elder man, who came to Helena in 1883, was for many years managing editor of the "Independent" and later the "Record-Herald," his column "Footprints of Time" appearing in the former. In later life he served as Commissioner of Agriculture under Gov. Sam Stewart (whose term was 1913 to 1921), and variously as agricultural agent for the Great Northern Railway and Montana Power. He died in Helena in 1934. The younger Mr. Greenfield, a native of Helena, got his first newspaper job as Billings representative for the Helena "Record." He later served as city editor on both Helena newspapers. He became publicist for the State Department of Agriculture in 1921, and in 1923 began a 26-year career in public relations and other executive positions for the Western Life Insurance company. He retired in 1950, and served a term as county commissioner of Lewis and Clark County. Greenfield and his wife, Elizabeth, are both enthusiastic researchers and writers of western history. Mrs. Greenfield contributed two articles in recent issues of this magazine. Her husband's writings are being featured in the Great Falls "Tribune" and an article is soon to appear in "True West" magazine.

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FORT BENTON'S fur-trade bastion, a portion of which still stands, was often the scene of Little Dog's activities. After signing the Indian-white treaties, the once-hostile Piegan chief took an increasingly active part in keeping his own tribesmen in line. This is an extremely old photograph of Fort Benton at the height of its Indian trade fame.

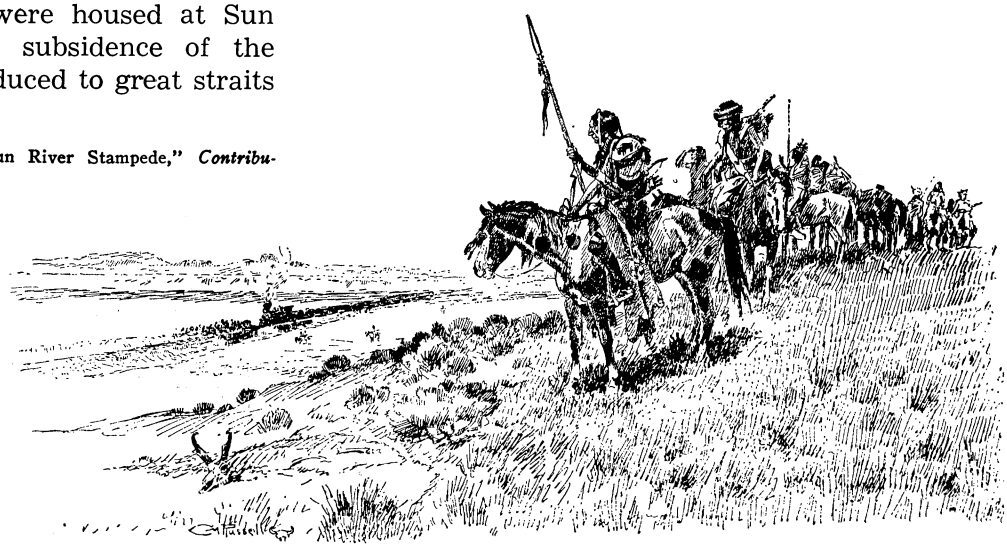
tenais while Hamilton and McKay were with them.

In the ill-fated Sun River stampede of 1865-66, the unsolicited assistance of Little Dog helped many prospectors escape starvation and death. It started this way: John McClellan had established a reputation as a lucky prospector. When he went to the Sun River valley to winter with a friend, the rumor quickly spread he had made a big strike. A wild stampede started, "in which probably a hundred men participated, pouring down (mostly from Helena) without provisions or forethought, without food, illy dressed, and not at all prepared to withstand the severity of the weather. Some on foot, some on horseback, they overran the [St. Peter's] mission, horse stables and all."[14] More than 500 actually came, hundreds more turned back on the road.

"About the time the advance guard learned the falsity of the reported discoveries, a severe snowstorm set in and the sufferings of many were intense. While prospectors were housed at Sun River awaiting the subsidence of the storm, they were reduced to great straits for food.

"When no one else was willing to stir abroad, Little Dog made almost daily trips to the bluffs in search of antelope and rarely returned without a supply of meat. Retaining only enough for his own use, he furnished the remainder to the snowbound prospectors and thus relieved the pressing necessities. X. Beidler was among the number thus benefited and it is he who narrated this anecdote to the author and he cherishes grateful recollections of Little Dog's hunting prowess and benevolence in this time of trial."[15]

Little Dog continued to befriend the whites despite the covert opposition of other members of his tribe. His position was made more difficult by the Indian war of 1865-66, touched off by the killing of nine white men and one negro (all of them woodcutters) by Blood Indians at the mouth of the Marias River. The whites retaliated in kind and wreaked vengeance on the innocent as well as the guilty.



[14] James H. Bradley, "The Sun River Stampede," *Contributions,* Vol. 9, p. 337.

[15] Ibid.

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MARSHAL X. BEIDLER, famed Montana frontier lawman, was among those who gave Little Dog credit for preventing starvation among hopefuls who stampeded to the Sun River country in search of gold in the winter of 1865-66.

ANDREW DAWSON, who was in charge at Fort Benton when he urged Little Dog to return for the gold cache on the Snake River, is the man for whom Montana's Dawson county is named. A native of Edinburg, Scotland, he came to St. Louis as a young man and hired out as a clerk for the American Fur Company. He worked at Fort Pierre and later at old Fort Clark north of Bismarck. He superseded Alexander Culbertson at Fort Benton, and ultimately became owner of that post. He became a member of the new American Fur Company managed by Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and composed of such men as Culbertson, James Kipp, and others, until it was absorbed in 1864 by the Northwest Company. At his death in 1882, the Glendive Times wrote: "Dawson was a hard drinker and was a helpless invalid for years previous to his death, which in a manner accounts for his extreme filth. He returned to Scotland where he died, detested by himself and everyone surrounding him."

It was not uncommon, when a war party returned to camp with horses or other property stolen from the whites, for Little Dog and his son to turn out with pistols and tomahawks in hand, kill every one of the thieves, and then return the property to the rightful owners. But when the offenders were too numerous to be punished, the two men would leave the tribe, living together with the whites until such time as the improved conduct of the tribe appeased their anger."[16]

One day Little Dog and his son, accompanied by some other members of his tribe, brought a prisoner to Fort Benton who had stolen some horses from the whites. "Hang him, shoot him; do anything you please with him," Little Dog told the agent. "I can do nothing with him."[17]

Resenting their chief's harsh measures against members of his own tribe, and probably inflamed by drink, the other Indians who had come along plotted to kill Little Dog and Fringe. Isadore, a half-breed, headed the group. En route back to the Piegan camp, the Indians halted for a round of drinks. Isadore suggested that since they were liable to get drunk, all should put away their guns to prevent trouble. This was agreeable to all. Fringe left the party for a swim in the river.

After the drinking party got under way, the plotters secretly recovered their weapons and then began to quarrel with Little Dog. He replied to their sneers and insults with equally contemptuous epithets. Finally he brought the quarrel to a climax by kicking three of them over the river bank. The other plotters grabbed their guns and began firing. Little Dog fell, riddled by bullets. Hearing the shots, Fringe rushed back. Then the guns were turned upon him. Four times he was shot down; but he arose each time, finally to

[16] J. J. Healy, quoted in Vaughan's *Then and Now*, pp. 160-161.

[17] Ibid.

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BUFFALO HUNT, 1915 oil by C. M. Russell which hangs in the Amon Carter Foundation in Fort Worth, Tex., is a graphic depiction of the carefree days after the Plains Indian had acquired the horse and before the final extermination of the buffalo by white men.

fall dead across the mutilated body of his father.[18]

Little Dog and Fringe had outlived their times.

Let us return for a moment to the massacre of the emigrants more than 20 years before. Aroused by stories of the rich loot to be had from emigrants on the Oregon trail, Little Dog took a war party, supposedly in 1845, down on the Snake River. Not far from Fort Hall they lay in ambush and when an emigrant train came within striking distance killed every man, woman and child in it. In one of the wagons Little Dog found a box that was filled with what he thought were brass buttons, but there were no holes in them! They were heavy, too. Reluctantly he decided to leave them behind, but instead of throwing the box away, cached it in the rocks overlooking Snake River, at a point where a rocky promontory juts into the valley of the Snake.[19]

It was only after rumors of gold discoveries in Montana began to circulate in Fort Benton trading establishments that Little Dog learned his brass buttons were in reality gold pieces. He told the traders about the massacre and they urged him time and again to go back to the valley of the Snake and get the gold. At last, through the urgings of Andrew Dawson, in charge of the post at Fort Benton, and the promise of a rich reward, Little Dog set forth to retrieve the gold pieces. But he turned back after going only a short distance, explaining he had done wrong to attack the wagon train and therefore was going to leave the gold where he had cached it.

Little Dog's days of savagery were long since over. But he was to reap the whirlwind of savagery still driving some of his own people who hated him for realizing an inevitable truth long before they did.

[END]

[18] Ibid. This account differs in some important particulars from one in the *Montana Post* of June 9, 1866, in its Fort Benton correspondence dated May 28, 1866. It refers to Little Dog as "the poor defenseless old man" and says he was overtaken on the road by Isadore on horseback, who asked to see Little Dog's revolver. Receiving it, he cooly rode off with it, despite Little Dog's remonstrances. His squaw recommended a hasty retreat to Fort Benton. Little Dog acquiesced but said he would get his pistol first. When he found the carousing Indians he was shot down. The article depicts a Little Dog very much out of his former imperious character.

[19] Narrative of James H. Bradley, Vol. 9, *Contributions*, p. 337. The Bradley version was first published in the *Benton Record*, March 1, 1875, under the caption "True Tales of Montana" by Cavalier. Five years later in its issue of March 12, 1880, the *Benton Record* published an unsigned article, presumably written by J. J. Healy. It stated the gold pieces were obtained from white traders, "in the Snake River country, somewhere in the neighborhood of the Three Tetons," who had them for "the purpose of buying beaver pelts from the free trappers." This does not sound reasonable, for in those days trappers were not interested in specie but in goods—guns, blankets, powder, whisky. Virtually all trade then was on a barter basis.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

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